

Laetitia Gendre - The fake, the fold and the erased

8 February - 29 March 2014

Opening reception Friday, 7 February 2014, 6-9 pm

In her second exhibition at Galerie Thomas Fischer Laetitia Gendre is showing a hand-drawn, photographed and printed film poster, a low wall made of (fake) concrete blocks, footage of an industrial machine breaking down, stills from imaginary films, and the outlines of Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas like so many clues in a paper chase where the smallest common denominator would appear to be forgery and paper.

Visitors are greeted by a video tape with found footage of a surveillance camera monitoring the production process in a Canadian paper factory. Without any apparent reason, a roll of paper snaps and a machine grinds to a halt. The quality of the images - low-resolution black-and-white video - is reminiscent of the early days of cinema. To further emphasise the impression of a strange journey back in time, the artist asked Noah Vanden Abeele, the pianist of the Brussels Film Library, to do what he usually does with silent films and improvise to the images of the video. But whereas back in the day the accident was intended to make us laugh (some guy gets his feet caught in a rug and lands on the other side of the room), Gendre's work - and presumably the entire exhibition - thrives on the disruption of the established order.

In recent years the work of Aby Warburg (1866-1929) has attracted renewed interest. There is a simple reason to this, and it is called Google Image. Thanks to this search engine, the Internet is a huge visual atlas from which thousands of images are extracted in a split-second. Warburg, on the other hand, collated his images on thematic plates that are infinitely more subtle than any computer algorithm. When re-drawing the Mnemosyne plates, Gendre kept only the layout and so to speak "forgot" to include the illustrations, only to better reveal the poetic underpinnings of Warburg's associations.

The only actual images in the exhibition - whether on a film poster or the drawings of imaginary film stills - are evocative of genre cinema. Cinema is a machine in which a film roll (like the paper roll in the video) travels from one reel to another. But cinema is also the realm of props, fakes, mock-ups and cardboard - such as the wall of mock concrete blocks (the fraud is revealed at the back of the sculpture) sitting in the centre of the gallery space as though waiting for a hypothetical construction to begin.

Whether hinting at Alain Resnais's industrial documentary films, the CCTV footage in Harun Farocki's work, Roger Corman's B-movies, Buster Keaton's short films, or Dionne Warwick's pop tune Paper Mache from 1970, Gendre's art is constructed from erased, folded, found, scrambled or hidden images - like children's secret messages written with lemon juice and waiting to be revealed by the delicate stroke of a candle beneath the sheet of paper.

Thibaut de Ruyter

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